



MDCR/MCRC E-newsletter for December 30, 2014

[An appalling Court of Appeals decision cries out for reversal](#)

From Bridge Magazine, 12/30

On November 6, the Michigan Court of Appeals, by 2-1, issued a decision in SS vs. Michigan that our state has no legal obligation to actually educate its schoolchildren. This week, we at the ACLU of Michigan asked the state Supreme Court to reverse this appalling decision.

[Blind justice-elect poised to make history](#)

From the Livingston Daily, 12/29

DETROIT – Richard Bernstein officially joins the Michigan Supreme Court in a few days. But he's been working off the clock since November, preparing for 10 cases in an extraordinary way — memorizing the key points of every brief read to him by an aide.

[Civil rights leaders at odds as Ferguson protests grow](#)

From USA Today, 12/28

Protests against police treatment of black people have laid bare growing tensions between longstanding civil rights groups that have battled discrimination for decades and new groups of leaders who want an edgier approach.

[Editorial: Headlines to hope for in 2015](#)

From the Lansing State Journal, 12/26

What would make Greater Lansing and Michigan thrive in the new year? It's become a tradition in this space to consider the news we'd like to see in the year ahead — community problems solved, progress made toward greater prosperity, continuation of economic growth that gives the Lansing region cause for a little swagger. With that in mind, a wish list for 2015:

[Grand Rapids Schools asking judge to dismiss case alleging sex abuse of boys by former teacher](#)

From MLive, 12/23

GRAND RAPIDS – The attorney for Grand Rapids Public Schools has filed a motion to dismiss the federal lawsuit being pursued by famed attorney Gloria Allred against the district regarding the alleged sexual abuse of five boys by a former math teacher.

[Group offers \\$1,500 reward for information about 'KKK picnic' sign in Tuscola County field](#)

From MLive, 12/22

SHAY LAKE, MI — A neighborhood watch group in Michigan's Thumb is offering a cash reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of whoever placed a sign that read "KKK picnic" in a Tuscola County field.

[Saugatuck, Douglas oppose Religious Freedom Restoration proposal](#)

From MLive, 12/22

SAUGATUCK – Two Lakeshore communities with a long history of welcoming those who are gay are taking a stand in opposition to a bill that passed the state House during the recent lame-duck session. It would allow people or businesses to seek exemptions to government regulations on religious grounds.

[Isis is not the same as Islam](#)

From the Detroit News, 12/22

Extremists for centuries have claimed religious reasons for their barbaric actions, creating a backlash against others who are truly following their beliefs. Today we are seeing that play out in Michigan, as members of our local Muslim community are facing hatred, harassment and vandalism in retribution for acts happening half a globe away – acts that they are quick to condemn themselves.

[Muslim U-M student says he faced backlash for writing conservative column](#)

From MLive, 12/22

A Muslim student at the University of Michigan is at the center of a controversy over a satirical column he wrote for the conservative Michigan Review.

[Roller coaster year for marriage equality leaves same-sex couples frustrated but resilient](#)

From MLive, 12/21

Marriage equality advocates in Michigan entered 2014 with the wind at their backs.

[Law firm claims discrimination for loss of DMC work](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/20

A Detroit law firm is battling the Detroit Medical Center's corporate parent over allegations that it lost contracts with DMC and wasn't paid for past work because of discrimination against one of the law firm's Arab-American partners.

[4 complaints in former Grand Rapids city clerk's \\$1 million job discrimination case](#)

From MLive, 12/19

GRAND RAPIDS – The granddaughter of the city's first African-American mayor claims she's no longer city clerk because she's a black woman.

[#blacklivesmatter movement strikes home for Kalamazoo-area protesters](#)

From MLive, 12/19

KALAMAZOO – Meelah Williams and Savonna Rush, both juniors at Loy Norrix High School, haven't experienced racial profiling or police brutality first hand, and they're not sure how much it's an issue in Kalamazoo.

[Dearborn Heights teen charges anti-Arab bullying at school](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/18

A freshman girl at a high school in Dearborn Heights was repeatedly bullied and then assaulted because of her Arab ethnicity, according to a civil rights complaint filed Thursday.

['Right to read' lawsuit headed to Michigan Supreme Court](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/18

The ACLU of Michigan is taking its "right to read" lawsuit to the Michigan Supreme Court, asking the top court today to reconsider an appeal's court decision to dismiss the suit. That lawsuit claims the state and Highland Park school district were negligent in providing an adequate education for students.

Holder: Discrimination Against Transgender People Banned By Federal Law

From MIRS, 12/18

U.S. Attorney General Eric HOLDER announced today the federal government would now consider discrimination against transgender people is, in fact, prohibited under federal civil rights law.

This reversal of the U.S. Department of Justice's former position now makes it illegal for employers to discriminate in the employment of an individual because of "such individual's . . . sex," among other protected characteristics. Holder's memo comes as a way to "reduce confusion" and "foster consistent treatment for all claimants," according to the U.S. Department of Justice's memo.

"This important shift will ensure that the protections of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are extended to those who suffer discrimination based on gender identity, including transgender status," Holder said in a statement. "This will help to foster fair and consistent treatment for all claimants."

[Arrest and Searches – Blacks and Hispanics caught up in traffic stops](#)

From City Pulse, 12/17

In a recent column on race relations and policing, I recounted statistics on traffic stops by the Lansing Police Department that could have suggested profiling. It's a subject worth exploring in greater detail, and because Lansing keeps detailed statistics on traffic stops, information that includes tracking race, age, outcomes and more.

[Michigan religious freedom bill stalls in lame-duck session](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/17

LANSING – Some powerful voices are aligned on both sides of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, but it appears the bill that provides protections for "sincerely held religious beliefs" will die for the year.

[Gov. Snyder's stance on RFRA is welcomed](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/17

It's not what he said, it's how he said it.

Gov. Rick Snyder, generally reluctant to weigh in on proposed legislation that hasn't passed the state Legislature, took an uncharacteristically firm stance on the state version of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, introduced by House Speaker Jase Bolger.

[Story of gay high school teacher to illustrate lack of civil rights protections](#)

From Michigan Radio, 12/17

In Michigan, you can be fired or denied housing for being gay. That's because there are no LGBT protections in the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

[Police dismayed to be seen as racists](#)

From the Detroit News, 12/18

Washington — Police officers dispatched to investigate a 911 hang-up recently in an Idaho suburb were surprised by the reaction they got from the mother of the children who had been playing with the phone.

[Police want to know who posted 'KKK picnic' sign in Tuscola County](#)

From MLive, 12/17

SHAY LAKE, MI — Police are trying to find out who left a racially offensive sign in a field in Michigan's Thumb. It could lead to ethnic intimidation charges against the person who placed the sign, police said.

[Religious liberty worth the debate](#)

From the Detroit News, 12/16

Cynthia and Robert Gifford own a farm near Albany, New York, and rent their facilities a few times a year for special occasions. Now, they face \$13,000 in fines because they didn't feel comfortable opening their facilities to a lesbian couple's wedding.

[Family sues Dearborn Heights cops, charges anti-Arab bias](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/16

Saying they were discriminated against because of their ethnicity and religion, a Dearborn Heights family filed a lawsuit today against the Dearborn Heights Police Department.

[Ann Arbor protesters call for end to 'racist policing,' decry shooting of Aura Rosser](#)

From MLive, 12/15

Now more than a month since 40-year-old Aura Rosser was fatally shot by an Ann Arbor police officer inside a home on the city's west side, frustration among community members still seeking answers remains.

[Guest commentary - PRO Religious-freedom act would protect Michigan people of faith](#)

From Bridge Magazine, 12/15

Opportunists have made wild claims about how the Michigan Religious Freedom Restoration Act (HB 5958) would allegedly undermine state laws protecting public health and safety, prohibiting discrimination and providing tax revenue for government programs. Such wild claims have similarly been made with respect to the federal RFRA (enacted in 1993), and all of the claims have been routinely rejected by federal courts. The federal RFRA does not apply to state and local governments, and that is why MiRFRA is needed today.

[CON Some communities see religious-freedom bill as setback for progress](#)

From Bridge Magazine, 12/15

The Michigan Religious Freedom Restoration Act, as spelled out in House Bill 5958, would create a substantial burden on our communities, by letting individuals avoid abiding by any state or local laws they say “hinder” their exercise of religion, and by enabling them to file suit challenging local ordinances and regulations.

[Can't Have Your Cake, Gays Are Told, and a Rights Battle Rises](#)

From the New York Times, 12/15

LAKEWOOD, Colo. — Jack Phillips is a baker whose evangelical Protestant faith informs his business. There are no Halloween treats in his bakery — he does not see devils and witches as a laughing matter. He will not make erotic-themed pastries — they offend his sense of morality. And he declines cake orders for same-sex weddings because he believes Christianity teaches that homosexuality is wrong.

[Finley: Where are the black people?](#)

From the Detroit News, 12/15

Near the top of the list of the challenges Detroit faces as it starts its post-bankruptcy era is avoiding becoming two cities — one for the upwardly mobile young and white denizens of an increasingly happening downtown, and the other for the struggling and frustrated black residents trapped in neighborhoods that are crumbling around them.

[Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Says Goodbye to Columbus](#)

From Native News Online, 12/14

PESHAWBESTOWN, MICHIGAN — The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Tribal Council has passed a resolution recognizing the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples Day. The Band is encouraging other local municipalities to also adopt the resolution and drop Columbus Day, officially recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day instead.

[Church message to community: Black Lives Matter](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/14

A thousand worshipers filled one of Detroit's largest churches Sunday to send out a message to the neighborhoods, the city and the nation.

[Muskegon-area church starts community dialogue with 'Black Lives Matter Sunday'](#)

From MLive, 12/14

MUSKEGON — A Muskegon-area church embraced the Black Lives Matter movement Sunday Dec. 14 with a service intended to start a community dialogue while stressing the importance of religion in the healing process.

[Grosse Pointers, Detroiters discuss race, other issues](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/13

The psychological and cultural barrier that Alter Road represents as a border street between Detroit and suburban Grosse Pointe Park can be illustrated in the fears of residents on both sides of the dividing line.

[Editorial: Local LGBT rights expansion should extend to Lansing](#)

From the Morning Sun, 12/12

This week's endorsement by the city of Mount Pleasant and Union Township for an expansion of the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include the LGBT community comes as no surprise. Both governments expanded their own non-discrimination ordinances two years ago, and if anyone had a real beef with it, they've kept it to themselves.

[Bay City commissioner authors online petition against Religious Freedom Restoration Act](#)

From MLive, 12/12

BAY CITY — Debate over Michigan's proposed "Religious Freedom Restoration Act" has come to Bay City, with City Commission President Christopher Girard starting a petition against the bill — one he says could lead to unwarranted discrimination, especially against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.

[Reported hate crimes on decline in Genesee County, FBI data shows](#)

From MLive, 12/12

GENESEE COUNTY — A lesbian Flushing couple awoke one Monday morning to find the words "lesso" and "weirdo" scrawled across their driveway in chalk, according to a Flushing police report.

[Kalamazoo Public Safety receives award for community policing efforts](#)

From MLive, 12/11

KALAMAZOO – The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety was recently recognized with a community partnership award for the agency's ongoing initiative to build stronger relationships between officers and city residents.

[In Farmington, leadership lessons start at early age](#)

From the Detroit News, 12/11

Imagine a school where children learn cooperation, civility and good citizenship every minute of the day.

[Saginaw detective hopes 'Hands up, speak up' slogan can reduce black-on-black violence](#)

From MLive, 12/11

SAGINAW — The phrase "Hands up, don't shoot" has become a national slogan to express anger over police accountability.

[DisArt Festival: Why Grand Rapids will mount 'the largest disability arts festival in America'](#)

From MLive, 12/10

GRAND RAPIDS – Photographer Robert Andy Coombs, a prize winner during ArtPrize 2012 for a series of photographs exploring physical disabilities and sexuality, was permanently injured in a gymnastics accident that left him paralyzed from the shoulders down.

[Metro Detroit schools face lawsuit claiming transgender child was bullied](#)

From WDIV, 12/10

It's a lawsuit that is capturing the attention of many.

[Schools' Discipline for Girls Differs by Race and Hue](#)

From the New York Times, 12/10

STOCKBRIDGE, Ga. — To hear Mikia Hutchings speak, one must lean in close, as her voice barely rises above a whisper. In report cards, her teachers describe her as "very focused," someone who follows the rules and stays on task. So it was a surprise for her grandmother when Mikia, 12, and a friend got into trouble for writing graffiti on the walls of a gym bathroom at Dutchtown Middle School in Henry County last year.

[Guest column: By failing to protect Michigan's LGBT residents, lawmakers harm entire state](#)

From MLive, 12/9

As Americans, we are taught that all people should be treated equally, and that justice is the birthright of every citizen. These core values are so important to the founding of our nation that they were enshrined in the words of our Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

[One day after Lansing-area man killed by police, hundreds gather to call for systemic change](#)

From MLive, 12/9

Religious leaders in Lansing called for dialogue and systemic change while the community voiced frustration and anger the day after a Lansing Township police officer fatally shot a 27-year-old man.

[The Rise Of 'License To Discriminate'; The Failure Of LGBT Civil Rights](#)

From PrideSource/BTL, 12/9

LANSING - The last weeks of any legislative session are often full of lawmaking chicanery, and this session is no different.

[Civil rights group succeeds in removing scripture sign from Ottawa County park](#)

From MLive, 12/8

GEORGETOWN TOWNSHIP, MI – A civil rights group has succeeded in getting a sign that displayed biblical scripture removed from Hager Park in Jenison, Advance Newspapers reported.

[Couple's gay marriage lawsuit against Gov. Snyder is still alive, despite federal court ruling](#)

From MLive, 12/8

EAST GRAND RAPIDS, MI -- As Brian Merucci and Bruce Morgan celebrate their first wedding anniversary this week, the milestone feels a little hollow because Michigan doesn't recognize their union.

[Activists talk mending police-citizen relations with grassroots 'Peace Zones' program](#)

From WXYZ, 12/8

There were no loud protests, sign-wielding or symbolic die-ins, but instead peaceful dialog at a meeting held by the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality to discuss how to mend citizen-police relations in light of recent protests sparked by outrage surrounding the killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner.

[Obama's Net Neutrality Bid Divides Civil Rights Groups](#)

From the New York Times, 12/7

WASHINGTON — When President Obama laid out his vision for strict regulation of Internet access last month, he was voicing views thought to be held by many at the most liberal end of the Democratic Party.

[When Talking About Bias Backfires](#)

From the New York Times, 12/6

A father and his son are in a car accident. The father is killed and the son is seriously injured. The son is taken to the hospital where the surgeon says, "I cannot operate, because this boy is my son."

[Chokehold death could awaken sleeping civil rights movement](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/4

I'm looking at the faces of protest. They are different colors. They are in different cities. Everything is different except the looks on their faces. They are the same. They are not looks of resignation, but looks of resolve.

[Lunchtime public school religious clubs run afoul of civil rights groups](#)

From MLive, 12/4

MUSKEGON – Civil rights groups have protested religious clubs provided to Fruitport and Grand Haven students during their lunch hours, a practice that Fruitport has since stopped.

[Catherine Rampell: Men want women to be equal, but the system defeats them](#)

From the Washington Post, 12/4

Most men aspire to be egalitarian. They really do.

[Forum discusses program cuts for Oakland's disabled](#)

From the Detroit News, 12/3

Troy — Oakland County resident Dennis Bandy lashed out at a forum Wednesday following funding cuts to agencies that serve people with mental and developmental disabilities in the county.

[Pregnancy discrimination debate hits home for Saginaw waitress](#)

From WNEM, 12/3

SAGINAW - Cassi Naylor serves up sandwiches with a smile at Wally's in downtown Saginaw.

[Supreme Court analyst: Momentum building for review of Michigan gay marriage case](#)

From MLive, 12/3

DETROIT – Lawyers for Louisiana on Tuesday asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review Michigan's landmark gay marriage case as well as a New Orleans federal district court ruling that upheld a same-sex marriage ban there.

[Axed Flint mayoral appointee Donna Poplar sues city, claims age discrimination](#)

From MLive, 12/3

FLINT – A former Flint Human Resources Department director is suing the city, claiming she lost her job in 2011 because of her age.

[Police stop in Pontiac not just about pockets](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/3

On Thanksgiving in Pontiac, an Oakland County sheriff's deputy stopped a man who had raised suspicions while walking down the street.

[District ordered to pay transgender student \\$75K](#)

From the Associated Press, 12/3

ORONO, Maine — A Maine court has awarded the family of a transgender girl \$75,000 in a settlement of her discrimination lawsuit against a school district where administrators made her use a staff, not student, bathroom.

[Officer honored for volunteer work with deaf, blind and hard of hearing adults, children](#)

From MLive, 12/2

JACKSON — When he isn't out on patrol, Columbia Township police officer Richard Rodden devotes a lot of his free time to helping those with hearing and vision loss.

[Pitts: Straight talk about 'black on black' crime](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 12/1

Let's talk about "black on black" crime.

[Boost HB1 Visas](#)

From the Detroit News, 11/30

Prospects for comprehensive immigration reform are no better than they were before President Barack Obama's Nov. 20 announcement that deportations for some illegal immigrants will essentially stop. In fact, they might be worse.

[Guest column: U.S. Court of Appeals got same-sex marriage decision wrong for Michigan](#)

From MLive, 11/30

MONTAGUE, MI – Recently, two majority judges for the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals told us to wait for a vote of the people to legalize same-sex marriage.

[Many gay couples not ready for retirement](#)

From the Detroit News, 11/30

New York – For Kathy Murphy, the difference between being gay or straight is \$583 a month.